

Incompatible philosophies or complementary roles? Civil society and business engagement in the water, sanitation and hygiene sector

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Introduction

Partnership with the private sector is emerging as a new pathway to address poverty. This is the result of recognition that external support through aid is small relative to other sources of finance and the scale of development challenge at hand. This concept is well recognised and was raised in the Australian Government's Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness, noting the need to harness the power of business and innovation (see Callan 2012). Other organisations have recently emerged which hold this as their core focus, for example Business for Millennium Development. In addition, evolving notions of social enterprise and entrepreneurship are blurring the boundaries between private sector and civil society, and opening up new possibilities for cooperation and partnership as exemplified by the water, sanitation and hygiene sector (WASH).

Over the past decade, poor functionality of water and sanitation services has called into question the effectiveness and sustainability of past and current approaches. In response, civil society organisations (CSOs) are exploring new approaches in water, sanitation and hygiene including engaging with small scale private and social enterprise (hereafter referred to collectively as 'enterprise') organisations to strengthen supply chains and build capacity for professionalised service provision. Engaging with and assisting in establishment of businesses reflects a shift in approach for CSOs, many of whom have historically been cautious of business interests in the development sphere, viewing for-profit models as potentially at odds with core civil society priorities of meeting basic needs and realising human rights for all.

Researchers at the Institute for Sustainable Futures are investigating this shift, working in partnership with four CSOs (Plan, WaterAid, SNV Development Organisation and East Meets West Foundation) actively seeking to engage with private and social enterprise to deliver sustainable and equitable water and sanitation services in Indonesia, Vietnam and Timor-Leste. Drawing on a systematic literature review and primary research in Indonesia, this paper explores these emerging partnership models, reflecting on if and how social and business objectives can align to achieve equitable service delivery, and the implications for development approaches for the future that involve business engagement.

Methods

Two methods were used to inform this paper.

First, we undertook a systematic review of literature, following the methodology of others in the international development sector (Hagen-Zanker et al. 2012; Hagen-Zanker and Mallett 2013; Gasteen 2010; DFID 2013). These methodologies acknowledge the difference to traditional systematic reviews, including a more flexible, sensitive and adaptable approach, the use of the 'snowball approach', inclusion of grey literature; while also maintaining a transparent approach with the use of a research protocol, inclusion and exclusion criteria and robust assessment of the evidence. The systematic review focused on papers published in the period 2008-2013 examining small scale enterprise involvement in water and sanitation services in developing country contexts. Of 4211 papers identified from first-round searching, 164 relevant documents were mapped against WASH categories and degrees of research rigour. From this, 82 documents were deemed highly relevant to the topic and were analysed in more detail.

This review examined five areas: types of enterprises providing WASH services; the strength of the evidence (relating to enterprise engagement); the success factors affecting enterprises; outcomes for the poor; and the engagement of CSOs to support such enterprises. This paper reports primarily on the first and the last of these areas – others are reported elsewhere (see Gero et al. 2013).

Second, we undertook field research in Java, Indonesia over two weeks in September 2013, which aimed to understand the role businesses were playing in the sector, the incentives that support or undermine their role, and how and why CSOs choose to engage to support enterprises. This included semi-structured interviews with 29 stakeholders representing private and social enterprises, national and international CSOs, donor organisations, and different levels of government from various relevant sectors to private sector development in the WASH sector. A political economy framework was used to frame the interview questions and analyse the data collected.

Types of private and social enterprises: What roles do enterprises play?

WASH services are supported by many different types of enterprises ranging from informal private sector providers to 'one-stop-shops' selling sanitation products, to user associations providing supporting roles to entrepreneurs (see Table 1). The breadth and diversity of types of organisations and their roles highlights the significant opportunities available to support and expand such roles.

Table 1: Private and social enterprise business models for WASH

<p>Formal private operators working under licence: Includes water treatment plant operators and truck companies delivering water and collecting waste. Formal operators have also been described as providers of water and sanitation services.</p> <p>(Sima et al. 2013; Lockwood and Smits 2011)</p>
<p>Franchises and network models: These models aim to encourage existing or new entrepreneurs to sell sanitation products from existing shops.</p> <p>(Cole 2013)</p>
<p>Informal private sector providers: In the water sector: water kiosk operators, water cart vendors, street vendors selling bottled water, small water bag vendors; direct water vendors selling water from taps, wells or rivers, 'middle-man' water distributors selling water to homes; pushcart water deliverers and small piped network providers. In the sanitation sector: vacuum truck owners, pump operators and masons, ranging from skilled masons, to simple masons to labourers.</p> <p>(Sima et al. 2013; Mahe and Wild 2010; Bereziat 2009)</p>
<p>Importers, Retailers, and Wholesalers: Building and construction materials stores sold sanitation related items such as cement, ceramic pans, PVC tubing and tiles. Wholesalers sold on to retailers and the public with examples from Cambodia where latrine components were a minor part of the range of products.</p> <p>(Salter 2008)</p>
<p>'One stop shop': Also called 'Rural Sanitation Marts', this type of sanitation business is discussed by several authors as a means to overcome fragmented supply chains. 'Sani-centres' are a similar concept whereby sanitation related marketing and products are made available through a local entrepreneur at a retail shop.</p>
<p>Prefabricated concrete producers: Prefabricated concrete producers sell concrete rings for well, water tanks, latrines and slabs. An example in the literature highlights that 40 per cent of rural sales and 65 per cent in urban areas were latrine related.</p> <p>(Salter 2008)</p>
<p>Micro-entrepreneurs: This group reportedly respond to demand and local opportunity. Services include some already listed under informal private sector providers. Some micro-entrepreneurs are family managed and financed, with business growth drawing on family for employees.</p> <p>(Mahe and Wild 2010; Kleemeier 2010)</p>
<p>NGOs and CBOs: There is some evidence of NGOs and community based organisations (CBOs) undertaking roles of service provision and being actors in supply chains in the water sector (see Section below on CSO engagement with enterprise). CBOs are also becoming more formalised in their provision of water supply services, with the need to be 'bankable' (ie, gain access for formal credit through banks). Literature also provides a comparison of CBO and private operator models, noting the weaknesses and risks of each.</p> <p>(Tiberghien 2013)</p>
<p>User associations: User associations sometimes participate in private sector-type operations, for example in Senegal, user associations hold operating leases and engage entrepreneurs to operate services, much like a management contract. Water user associations in Niger, Senegal, Burkina Faso, and Paraguay are participants in the private operator model.</p> <p>(Kleemeier 2010)</p>
<p>Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), with private sector operators to maintain and manage larger systems under contract: Most examples of PPPs come from Africa and consist of rural communities, small scale operators and other private firms being awarded contracts to work with utilities and government departments in the delivery of water supply services.</p> <p>(Annis and Razafinjato 2011)</p>
<p>Large companies and international / multi-national corporations: Examples from Burkina Faso Gabon, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Paraguay and India highlight that large companies are active in WASH service provision in developing countries.</p>

Note: full reference details can be found in Gero et al. (2013).

CSO engagement with enterprise: What does the literature say?

Evidence about engagement between enterprise and CSOs in academic and grey literature was limited, likely because it is a new phenomenon. However a breadth of roles and examples were available and are described here. Most engagement was found to consist of CSOs offering capacity building support to businesses or to informal operators. For example, capacity building came in the form of training for businesses, through financial and technical assistance (Kleemeier 2010; Mahe and Wild 2010) and through provision of materials and tools (Singh 2012).

Top down, supply side assistance was offered in the water sector through technical support in designing contracting arrangements (Mahe and Wild 2010), while the Water and Sanitation Management Organisation (WASMO) programme in India provides an example of a

CSO engaging with government to ensure sustainability of services.

Many CSOs are turning to sanitation marketing as an approach to engage with enterprises. However, many CSOs were found to have limited skills and experience in engaging with business. Approaches to CSO engagement in sanitation marketing can occur through technical support as governments lead implementation, or CSOs lead implementation themselves, with close support from government and community (Pedi and Jenkins n.d).

A final example of a role CSOs play in regard to enterprises is that of active engagement in the supply chain. Examples from Africa include NGOs providing maintenance and spare parts and producing and distributing chlorine products (Hystra 2011). An example from India highlights the blurring of private enterprise with CSOs through a 'social sector organisation' in water treatment (Kleemeier 2010).

Outcomes for the poor

If CSOs are to partner with enterprise, one of their expected key concerns could be how enterprise can act as a vehicle to reach the poor rather than those who are better off. Findings from Indonesia describe current evidence on if and how enterprises are reaching the poor in their contributions to the WASH sector. Overall there was not strong evidence that the poor are being reached, which calls into question the alignment between CSO pursuits compared with the role of enterprise.

In both water and sanitation literature, serving the poor was not raised as a specific priority for businesses. To ensure business viability through maintaining profits, sanitation businesses preferred to service non-poor customers (Bereziat 2009; Desalegn et al. 2012; Tiberghien 2013) and expand to new areas once ‘early adopters’ have been serviced (Pedi et al. 2012; Baker et al. 2011). Sanitation marketing literature acknowledges that serving the ‘bottom of the pyramid’ is not the primary aim of the approach, rather it aims to capture least poor customers first to drive aspirational motivation amongst the poor (Narracott and Norman 2011). There was mention of the role of social business models, with some authors arguing this approach will lead to lower costs and correspondingly allow poor to participate in the sanitation market (ibid).

Some evidence of water sector businesses offering flexibility in pricing structures was found in the literature, allowing poor households and communities to access the market. For example, entrepreneurs in the informal private sector have demonstrated flexibility in pricing to allow for poor households and communities to access services. One study noted that:

Price seems to be the highest in areas where consumers can afford to pay larger fees...This finding contradicts conventional opinion that private providers take advantage of poor urban resident (Sima et al. 2013:141–142).

Another study provided evidence of flexible pricing depending on economic need (Annis and Razafinjato 2011), while another highlights the need to align design and delivery of products with the needs of the poor (see Ramani et al. 2012 for a checklist for successful diffusion of pro-poor innovation).

Given this lack of evidence that the poor are reached by enterprises, it is useful to examine the actual experience of CSOs and enterprise to better understand the alignment, or not, of their goals. Examples from Java, Indonesia are provided below.

Elements shaping engagement with small private sector: Findings from Indonesia

Research in Indonesia revealed a growing trend for both CSOs and other development partners to engage with small scale enterprise within the last five years. Prior to this time, only large scale private sector or construction contractors were reported to have been involved, but more recently a breadth of opportunities were emerging and

being filled by individuals and new organisations. These included sanitation entrepreneurs selling and installing household toilet facilities, small scale businesses offering desludging services and distributors of water purification products, as well as collective organisations operating as a form of social enterprise. Examples of the latter were ‘professionalised’ water committees who had formed cooperatives to allow them to access loans and expand services, as well as associations of sanitation entrepreneurs, who were playing roles to support private entrepreneurs.

Where CSOs were engaging to support enterprise, the key motives behind their engagement appeared to be a focus on sustainability: *‘NGOs are funded on a project basis. But if [it] can transfer a project into a business opportunity then it can continue.’* CSOs were also being prompted to act as intermediaries to allow support to be provided to enterprise from donors or from government, as there was a perception that donors and government could not directly support for-profit organisations. As one stakeholder said: *‘Donors can’t directly provide private sector because of regulations’*. Equally, a government representative noted there was a need for more local NGOs (whom government can fund directly) who could act as intermediaries to support development of sanitation enterprises.

In terms of differences in philosophies and aims, diverse perspectives were heard. On the one hand there were CSOs who didn’t see a big difference in their objectives versus those of enterprise: *‘There are differences but not serious ... it’s in line’*. This was particularly the case where the enterprise involved in fact had strong social motives anyway, which aligned to those of the CSO. For instance one sanitation entrepreneur described his lenient approach to seeking repayments due to a social mission:

Repayments – I didn’t make any terms – one week, one month, one year-1.5 years – we’re not only about business, it is a social purpos^o.

On the other hand, there was an example of a CSO whose approach was rooted in concepts of community self-sufficiency and sharing, and viewed market based solutions as running contrary to this and as a result resisted working to engage with enterprise:

The least you’re dependent on the market, the more you’re independent...when they have knowledge they have to share it, not keeping it for yourself...[it’s the] spirit of sharing.

CSOs were also being tested in terms of defining the limits to the kind of support they were best placed to give as civil society actors. For instance, questions arose about whether financial support to enterprise was appropriate, with one CSO noting that they avoided this as: *‘Real entrepreneurs should sacrifice their own money to start a business.’* Equally, concerning tensions arose from CSO’s perceived need to avoid promoting specific enterprises or companies. For instance one CSO involved in supporting distribution of water purification products spoke of how

they wanted to promote access to supply, but not a specific brand, and therefore developed information communication materials that were non-brand specific. Similarly, concerning sanitation suppliers, one CSO described their role as follows:

When people have been triggered [to want a toilet], and supply is needed, our role is to pass on information [about potential suppliers].'

CSOs also met with other challenges in engaging with enterprises. Where they were based in locations with very little business activity, finding individuals with the outlook and capacity to act as entrepreneurs was challenging. Equally, donor reporting requirements were suggested to focus on short-term targets (e.g., number of people with access to improved sanitation) rather than development of sustainable markets that might grow beyond the time-frame of a funded 'project'. Finally, CSOs working closely with government experienced a lack of knowledge and interest by government in building enterprise capacity, since this area is very new, and will take time for the public sector to find its place and role.

Conclusion – what next?

This paper provides examples from literature and the field of the various roles and relationships between enterprise and CSOs in the WASH sector to explore whether CSOs and businesses have 'incompatible philosophies' or 'complementary roles'. The link to 'Development Futures' is seen in the rise of private and social enterprise as an emerging trend and potential pathway to address poverty. We have provided an account of how social entrepreneurs and socially-minded businesses blur the boundary between private sector and civil society, and represent an important area of focus in poverty reduction strategies.

Evidence highlights examples of both incompatible philosophies and complementary roles, which comes from the diversity of types of engagement across a variety of contexts. Evidence also shows that the skill set required by both small scale WASH operators and CSOs needs further development, and hence drawing on the skills and expertise of other sectors, businesses and academic expertise is likely to be important going forward. In addition, developing an enabling environment for businesses to grow may require more proactive support than has been provided to date, particularly with respect to ensuring socially inclusive approaches from which the poor might feasibly benefit. A key point raised in this paper is that the possibility of businesses that are driven by social objectives as well as CSOs that have their eye on sustainability, are important drivers for existing and future CSO enterprise engagement.

Lastly, this paper demonstrates both the opportunity and complexity of this newly emerging pathway of engaging with small scale enterprise to support services for the poor, and may offer useful lessons to other sectors for how enterprise engagement is taken forward.

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The sum is more than the parts: Impacts of the Australian Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Reference Group

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Introduction

Partnerships offer benefits, leverage and influence that single organisations are unable to achieve alone. Established in 2007, the Australian WASH Reference Group (WRG) is an informal network of diverse organisations working on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in developing countries. This paper offers the WRG as a case study of how diverse actors can work in partnership to strengthen civil society practice and outcomes. It outlines the history of the WRG and its operations, successes and challenges faced, and concludes with reflections on lessons learned that can be applied to other civil society groupings hoping to strengthen practice and influence policy within their sector. The information is largely drawn from the authors' experiences as long term members of the group, and from reviews of the WRG, including a Ways of Working Review (WaterAid 2012) and a Reflections Report (Plan 2012).

The WASH Reference Group

The group emerged from a small collection of people scattered across a variety of Australian NGOs and academic institutions, all committed to WASH and sharing a common frustration with Australia's limited contribution to this sector. The broad collective aim is to improve Australia's response to the global water, sanitation and hygiene crisis, and the group seeks to do this by pursuing five objectives:

- making WASH a priority for Government and development agencies;
- mainstreaming WASH within Australian aid policies and programmes;
- improving the quality and volume of Australia's foreign aid for WASH;
- establishing and strengthening a Community of Practice; and
- building public awareness and support for WASH.

The WRG has an open membership comprising Australian-based organisations involved in WASH, including NGOs, academic institutions and independent contractors. The Australian Water Association is also a member and represents the domestic water industry. Membership is by agency, with individuals regarded as formal representatives of their agency. The group now has a membership of 30 organisations, represented by 60 individuals, encompassing most of the organisations in Australia working on WASH in developing country contexts. The cost of time and contributions to WRG work is covered by member agencies.

The group maintains a link with ACFID (the NGO peak body in Australia), primarily through joint contributions to ACFID papers and processes; however, the group operates outside of the ACFID structure, principally to maintain its open membership base which includes non-ACFID members.

WRG ways of working

The WRG is led by a self-nominated Executive Committee (ExCom), including a chairperson. The ExCom's role is to agree on broad strategy, prepare a workplan for the coming year and to facilitate preparation for upcoming activities and meetings. ExCom members are expected to play a leadership role, represent the group as needed in external meetings and participate in all internal meetings. Feedback from internal reviews (Plan 2012; WaterAid 2012) prompted changes to membership processes of the ExCom, now re-opened annually for any member to self-nominate to the committee.

Meetings of the group can be broadly classified into three types: Community of Practice sessions, meetings with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT, previously the Australian Agency for International Development, AusAID); and planning meetings. Community of Practice activities include conferences, publications and sharing days. Joint meetings with DFAT are held approximately twice annually, with the agenda jointly agreed upon by DFAT and the WRG, and sessions co-chaired. These meetings present an opportunity to deliver key messages to DFAT and share information. Where possible a planning meeting is held ahead of this joint meeting. Additional meetings are organised on an as needs basis. For example in 2008–09, when the first Australian government water and sanitation initiative was announced, there were frequent meetings to prepare for and discuss with AusAID (now DFAT) the principles and priorities for the initiative.

Achievements of the WRG partnership

Over the last seven years substantial progress has been made towards the objectives of the group. These contributions could not have been achieved by one agency alone and are the result of members working in partnership. Notable achievements of the group are:

- Successful advocacy to Government for increases in priority given to, and allocations for, WASH within Australia's aid programme. To date, annual government funding to WASH has increased from \$45 million in 2007–08 to \$279 million in 2013–14.

- Regular dialogue with DFAT on the effective spending of these resources and on Australia's role in ending the global sanitation and water crisis. This dialogue with DFAT has contributed to a change of direction and a new thematic WASH strategy which emphasises a pro-poor focus, behaviour change and sustainability.
- Enhanced knowledge, capacities and development practice of members through Community of Practice activities, such as increasing the evidence base documenting good practice in WASH. Examples include the inclusive WASH publication and website (WaterAid 2013), and the sharing experiences publication series on hygiene practices (WaterAid et al. 2011), hygiene promotion (WaterAid et al. 2010) and sanitation (IWC et al. 2008). These resources are now widely used globally within the WASH sector.
- Achievement of a strong focus on learning and knowledge, something that has been recognised by DFAT and has since become institutionalised in DFAT's funding window for NGO WASH programming, the Civil Society WASH Fund. A learning component was included in the initial funding round of this programme and has been strengthened in subsequent funding rounds. Significant resources have been allocated to knowledge building and all CSOs are required to resource knowledge and learning within their programmes and the fund itself includes a knowledge and learning manager to facilitate cross-institutional and cross-regional learning.

Whether these achievements have directly contributed to improved outcomes for beneficiaries is yet to be determined. Kelly and Roche's (2014) recent study of Australian NGO partnership models identified that evidence directly attributing partnership models with effective development outcomes is scarce. By improving its monitoring and evaluation the group will be able to better make this connection and contribute to this knowledge gap.

Why is the model effective?

A number of key enablers have contributed to the effectiveness of the WRG partnership model. A core group of dedicated people working together with clarity of purpose has been a key reason for many of the achievements to date. For many people this has involved an additional voluntary commitment above and beyond their regular work. Whilst motivations for involvement differ, collective civil society interest, shared values and intent to work together towards desired changes are often noted as primary drivers for participation in this partnership.

WaterAid's resourcing of the group's secretariat has been critical, as it has always provided a coordinating function to the group, even when chairpersons and other members of the ExCom have left. The fact that WaterAid has resourced this role to date and the WRG has not had to seek financial contributions from members or donors has greatly simplified the group's workings. For WaterAid, performing this function has complemented its own strategy of increasing Australian Government support to WASH which has been a win-win situation for both the WRG and WaterAid. However there is a sustainability

question over how long WaterAid will continue to perform this function and the WRG has not yet explored how it would manage this issue.

Membership diversity has been another key strength. NGOs have been important in envisioning advocacy opportunities and providing practical programme experiences; academic institutions have introduced analytical rigor and technical expertise; and at times the water industry has helped the group differentiate itself from other NGO groups. These different skill sets have given credibility to the group with DFAT and parliamentarians and allowed the group to remain active, relevant and capable of responding to changing discourses (such as the post-2015 agenda), while affording members opportunities to undertake different roles and responsibilities as according to their capacities, interests and competencies.

Within the DFAT WASH team there has been an openness and willingness to engage in open dialogue. The WRG has been able to build a level of trust with DFAT that did not initially exist. At times, agendas of the WRG and DFAT align and the relationship is easy to manage, while at other times agendas differ and the relationship can become tense. Clear communication of intentions and plans, and a high level of trust between the WRG and DFAT have enabled points of tension to be overcome.

Challenges and responses

Two recent reviews (Plan 2012; WaterAid 2012) revealed some challenges to which the group has sought to respond. The reviews highlight the need for ongoing review of partnership, communication mechanisms, ways of working and ensuring that there are feedback loops to communicate and problems or tensions. Power dynamics exist in every relationship, yet are often an unspoken part of partnerships (Clark 2003), and power relations are an ongoing and underlying challenge faced by the WRG.

At times the group has struggled to reach consensus and to be clear about attribution of activities. Given the large membership and different individual and agency viewpoints it can be difficult to achieve consensus on particular decisions, such as joint submissions. When looking to brand submissions as being on behalf of the whole group this process can be cumbersome, particularly in instances when not all agencies formally agree to or endorse a piece of work. Similarly, when WaterAid in its Secretariat role has played an active role in producing or communicating WRG agendas, there has been confusion as to whether these are WRG or WaterAid activities. One practical solution has been to develop a tagline to be included on any materials produced on behalf of the group which states 'Submission prepared by the WASH Reference Group with special input from...[agency names that agreed and contributed]'

Fowler (2012) emphasises that the quality of interactions between individuals in relationships contributes to the effectiveness of the partnership. Individuals as representatives of their agencies are the interface of partnerships, and hence individual competencies are

important. Within a working group setting, the following competencies are valued in individuals: diplomacy, technical competency, collaborative ways of working, an ability to negotiate, good interpersonal skills, and confidence in verbal communication. In recognition that within any group these competencies vary (for example, some individuals are more vocal than others), the WRG has consciously varied meeting formats to allow for different engagement techniques (particularly smaller group work) and tried to rotate chairs for different parts of the agenda. When this is not done, and meeting structures revert to a plenary format, more vocal participants limit the diversity of contributions.

The imperative of individual agencies to obtain funding means member organisations often have to balance collaboration with competition, which also means there are potential tensions in the group functions, most obviously when the group is lobbying for greater resources for WASH and securing some of these funds for member agencies. Meetings with DFAT around funding opportunities have seen greater participation of members. Other subtle potential tensions exist in terms of knowledge development and advocacy on setting agendas.

Conclusion

Partnerships offer benefits, leverage and influence that single organisations cannot achieve alone. The WRG offers an example of how partnership can enhance efforts to strengthen civil society practice and influence government. The complementary and contributing roles of NGOs, academics and industry representatives are key to the success of the WRG. In addition, having a well resourced coordinating body has provided momentum and focus to the group. Individual relationships and competencies have played an integral part in the WRG's operations with trust and dialogue critical, particularly between civil society and government. The characteristics of the partnership which aided its success are: flexibility

and adaptability; an emphasis on learning through a Community of Practice; and learning to improve the functioning of the partnership itself.

A 'big picture' view of Australia's role in ending WASH poverty and inequality and identifying a range of strategic influence points means avenues to pursue this agenda continue, and different members of the group can continue to contribute. Lessons learned from this partnership model operating in the Australian WASH sector offer ideas for other sectors wanting to take collective action to alleviate poverty.

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Pathways to development through local faith communities

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Introduction

Despite the success associated with several Millennium Development Goals, humanity is faced with unacceptable levels of material poverty, increasing socio-economic inequality, growing scarcity of natural resources and ongoing or newly emerging conflict between various ethnic and religious groups. Within this context, concern has emerged over the potential for religious fundamentalism to impede progress. Notably, at times of uncertainty, fundamentalism, religious or otherwise, tends to thrive as people seek certainty in an uncertain world. Conceding that religious and other forms of fundamentalism can be very destructive, and recognising that the role of religion within development theory and practice remains marginalised, this paper considers the positive changes that are possible at the nexus between 'religion' and what can loosely be described as 'development'. Running parallel to concerns over the rise of religious fundamentalism is a growing movement to engage local faith communities and religious resources more effectively in the processes of human development. In this paper original CPP research on gender programming in the Papua New Guinea (PNG) Church Partnership Program (CPP) is presented as a brief case study that illustrates the potential when development processes engage with, rather than avoid, religion. We argue that in the case of PNG, attempts to separate 'religion' and 'development' result in an uncomfortable dichotomy. Rather than religion being viewed as irrelevant, or in direct opposition to development goals, there is significant common ground to be found between the two. It is the willingness of all stakeholders in the development enterprise to work together within this common ground that suggests its potential as a future pathway to poverty reduction and human development.

The role of religion

Religion is a significant component of the lives of the vast majority of the world population and is likely to remain so into the future. By one recent estimate over 88 percent of the global population consider themselves to be members of a religious group. Less than 10 percent indicate a non-religious affiliation and only two percent describe themselves as atheists (CIA 2013). Within Australia, widely considered to be a largely secular nation, census results suggest that 64 percent of Australians identify themselves as Christian. Although McCrindle (2012) indicates that this affiliation is purely nominal for the majority of Australians, and this may also be the case in developing countries, the connection remains strong enough to drive important aspects of behaviour and identity or to legitimate important social services providers. In many of the developing nations of the Pacific the proportion of citizens claiming religious affiliation and practice is much

higher. Estimates across all Pacific nations, excluding Australia and New Zealand, indicate that over 95 percent of the population identify as Christian (Pew Research Centre 2011). The religious communities in these countries are vibrant, active and already engaged in the improvement of their societies. Many of the medical, educational and social support services available to the population in these countries are provided by religious communities. For example, in PNG Hauck et al. (2005:14) points out that church representatives see 'social work' as their primary strength in working with communities. Christian groups collectively provide 50 percent of all health services, co-manage 40 percent of primary and high schools and run two of the nation's six universities. Additionally, organised churches in PNG are heavily involved in reconciliation and peace building, development of public policy and direct service provision.

Key to discussing the role of religion in relation to development processes is the need to identify components of religious experience and practice. Ter Haar (2011) categorises religious 'resources' into religious ideas, religious practices, religious organisation, and religious experience. Of these four categories the third is favoured when identifying potential for religion to enhance or hinder human development and nation building. This relates to the potential and capacity for religious communities to engage their members and deliver services that contribute to the broader development agenda. In the case of PNG, in 2010 the Seventh Day Adventist Church, which served approximately 10 percent of the population, operated one of the nation's six universities and 100 schools, assisting a total of 21,000 students (Watson 2012). For the most part, this sort of service provision, provided it is done well, is broadly deemed to be both necessary and beneficial while PNG develops export industries and a taxation base sufficient to bolster the public education system.

Ideas and beliefs are perhaps the aspect of religion most often questioned by secular development practitioners. Beliefs held by religious groups which act, intentionally or otherwise, to oppose or counter aspects of the development or human rights agenda, attract widespread concern, a prime example of which is the perpetuation or imposition of patriarchal norms on women which may have a devastating impact on their wellbeing. The rise of religious fundamentalism since the 1970s is a source of grave concern among secular critics and religious moderates. Notably however, a range of inconsistent and emotive definitions and uses of the term fundamentalism exist. For the purposes of this paper a contextual approach is taken drawing primarily from Emerson and Hartman (2006), who characterise religious fundamentalism as a reaction of communities against the marginalisation of religion by modernity and its accompanying processes of

development. By such accounts fundamentalism is a defensive aspect of religion that emerges naturally when secular development processes or other stressors are forced on religious communities. While this is one of various theories, of particular concern is the capacity for religious belief to be seized by extreme elements in society and used to incite conflict, violence and the abuse of human rights in ways contrary to the underlying value system of the religion itself. We argue that religious fundamentalism is more likely to arise and have a negative impact when development processes do not adequately engage or take into account the religious beliefs, practices, experiences and organisations of a community or society as a whole.

Religion and development

The past five years have seen an increasing interest in the synergies apparent at the intersection of religion and development that have perhaps been forgotten over time. While Christian missionaries have been best and worst known for evangelistic endeavour, their commitment to the social gospel has been less recognised. For example, a 1928 Church of England Study book (cited in Hilliard 1978:259) asserted 'the Christianising of the world involves the creation of sanitary conditions, of an educational system, of social, economic, and political welfare, in which life and life abounding may come to its full personal and corporate development'. Watson (2012:92) argues that to some extent the discourse of development mirrors that of traditional evangelical mission with obvious similarities between the dichotomies heathen/poor, primitive/illiterate, missionary/development worker, missionary organisation/NGO, gospel message/human rights message, evangelism/modernisation and civilised/empowered. Interest has come from a broader range of actors than those in academia and includes obvious candidates such as the development organisations of Christian denominations such as the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and Caritas or those faith-based development organisations not tied to a specific denomination such as Islamic Relief and World Vision. Other less obvious actors include government aid donors from Australia and the United States of America, and multilateral agencies like the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development and the World Bank. To some extent all have promoted the need to mesh broader development objectives with religious resources.

It is the view of ADRA Australia staff that increased engagement with faith-based groups is a positive trend in that it brings the potential for improved human development outcomes and increases the leverage of a broader range of religious community resources for development programmes. However, most commentators note that there are a number of gaps regarding both knowledge and engagement that need to be addressed for synergies to be maximised. In particular, 'the existing literature ... is conspicuous in its failure to take religious ideas seriously in the sense that many scholarly works on religion and development regard religious thought as representing something else, generally some social quality or economic trend' (Ter Haar 2011:3). These gaps are important to

address for several reasons. First, they mitigate against effective engagement of religious communities in addressing development challenges around challenging issues such as gender inequality. Second, the lack of good information about the role that religious communities play, in all their complexity, in effective human development makes it challenging for policy and decision makers to take appropriate actions and resource allocations.

To address these gaps a number of formal and informal groups have emerged, each with a focus on strengthening both learning and practice in the engagement of religious communities with development programmes. Some, such as the Religions and Development Research Programme are coalitions of academic institutions. Others, such as the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs at Georgetown University, represent a single academic institution with close ties to a range of key development actors. A third type, of which the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities is a prominent example, are coalitions of a broad range of actors from academia, religious groups, development actors and the private sector. The combined effect of all this effort is an increasingly detailed picture of the existing and potential engagement of religion in development and improved understanding of good practice. What is missing, however, are specific case studies that demonstrate both the difficulties and successes possible when development practitioners work more closely with faith based groups and organisations.

Religion and gender

This paper does not set out to delve deeply into the relationship between religion and gender. However, it is necessary to touch on some of the issues that others have addressed in considerable detail, particularly as they relate to the argument being presented here and the case study from the Church Partnership Program in PNG. Gender, and specifically gender inequality, is a challenging issue for many development practitioners who belong to religious communities. Apparently homogenous religious communities contain a diversity of beliefs regarding gender roles, especially where religious communities incorporate numerous cultural groups. Development practitioners may find that corporate beliefs are in tension with their own beliefs and the gender equality ideals and human rights they are striving to achieve. Tadros (2010) effectively summarises these tensions by describing four conundrums commonly found in the engagement of faith-based organisations with gender inequality. The first conundrum relates to inconsistency in the standpoints that the organisation takes in relation to various gender issues. The second is characterised by complexity in the mix of both power and limitations imposed by religious tradition on women in a range of activities. The third lies in the degree to which religious organisations working at the community level may, or may not actually represent indigenous voices. The fourth describes dilemmas faced by women if services provided by faith-based organisations are directly or indirectly conditional on conformity with traditional gender norms. These tensions, which derive

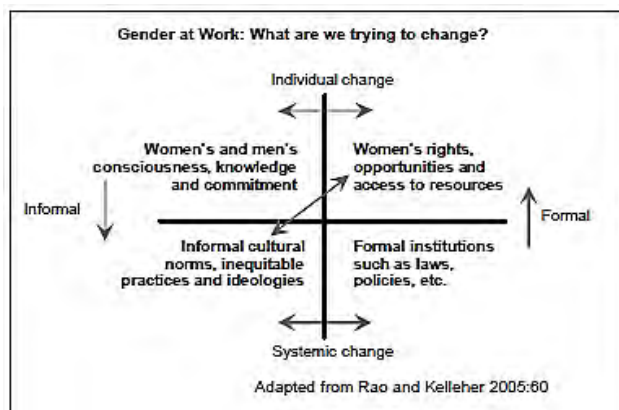
largely from the patriarchal nature and discriminatory treatment of women inherent in the practices and traditions of many of the world's major religions, create challenges to establishing common ground and collaboration between secular development actors and religious organisations. The depth and width of the gap that these challenges create should not be underestimated when seeking new pathways to future development goals.

The Church Partnership Program

The Australian Government funded CPP in PNG is a 'long-term, multi-stakeholder partnership between seven denominational Australian Non Government Organisations (ANGOs), the churches in PNG that they represent, and the governments of PNG and Australia' (Kelly and Roche 2014:30). It was first funded in 2004 based on recognition of the key roles played by churches in the areas of health, education and social services provision within the PNG context. The underlying premise is that the quality and scale of this service may be enhanced if the capacity of, and collaboration between, the various churches is strengthened.

Based on a review of the first phase of the CPP, the partners agreed to an increased emphasis on mainstreaming gender and achieving outcomes related to gender equality in the second phase of the programme which began in 2010.

Figure 1



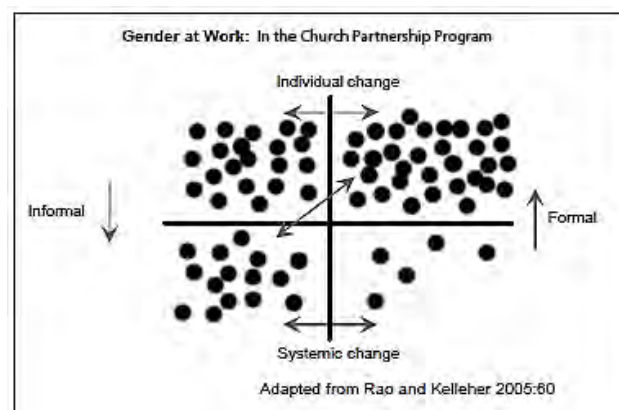
CPP activities, as reported by church leaders and programme staff, and documented in formal project reports, were particularly focussed on achieving individual change at the formal level but also at the informal level. For example, it was common to find churches operating gender awareness trainings for church leaders and establishing gender action groups at congregation level. Activities of this type were reported as prevalent in all seven of the church partners. One church partner was in the process of identifying gender champions from bishop down to lay member levels and forming action groups throughout their church structures to increase awareness of gender equality issues. Likewise, a richly diverse range of activities such as skills or leadership training for both men and women, and provision of gender sensitive health and education services were common across all seven churches.

Church programmes often engaged both men and women demonstrating an understanding of the dynamics

This aligned with AusAID's gender strategy for PNG which highlighted the importance of coordination of gender equality initiatives, and of improving the collection, analysis and use of gender equality data through joint monitoring and evaluation (AusAID 2010).

In 2012 a gender review was conducted by the lead author to establish a framework for further action against these commonly held objectives. The review took place over three weeks during February and March of 2012 and utilised semi-structured, qualitative methodologies based around AusAID's gender equality approach and the Rao-Kelleher gender change model shown in Figure 1 (Moser 2007:10). Fifty-one key informants identified by the churches participated in either individual or group interviews. The informants consisted of just over 50 percent women with group interviews usually involving a mix of men and women. The overall approach described above was deliberately adopted in order to allow a transparent and non-threatening engagement with all stakeholders on a potentially sensitive issue. The review found that all church partners engage with gender issues in their programme activities and that all seek to contribute to the achievement of gender change in relation to gender equality and women's rights. This is illustrated in Figure 2 which plots identified church activities against the Rao-Kelleher model, and described in more detail below.

Figure 2



of gender issues within their religious communities. For example, churches that provided HIV/AIDS voluntary counselling and testing were not only aware of low access rates by men and seeking to address barriers to men's participation, but also aware of the consequences in terms of violence and social stigmatisation for women when they accessed such services without their husband being tested too. That the churches were actively seeking to provide gender sensitive services reduced the likelihood of conflict violence in the family (Webster 2012). It was evident to the researchers that long-term engagement of partners with the CPP was building gender awareness in service delivery by churches. CPP staff who self-identified as gender awareness champions within their churches indicated an optimism that change could take place. In several interviews, participants cited the shift over time in attitudes towards HIV/AIDS programmes within churches as evidence that positive was achievable.

Programming to address systemic change at either informal or formal levels was less common and 'is an area that could be strengthened, particularly in relation to understanding and effectively using gender change agents and the development of gender policy within religious communities' (Webster 2012:2). For example, only one church had formally adopted a gender policy, while three others were addressing some aspects of gender in existing formal structures. Informal systemic change was more common, though still with less activity across the churches than seen with activities aimed at individual change. Perhaps the most common example provided in interviews was the presence of the CPP itself within the church. In several cases the presence of senior staff, often women, from the CPP interacting regularly and raising gender issues amongst the church leadership was seen as a positive disruption to established gender norms within the church.

As a long-running collaboration between both secular and faith-based actors that deliberately seeks to find common ground around gender issues in development, the CPP represents an encouraging case study of an 'integral development' model. Interviews during the review process explored many of the conundrums outlined by Tadros within the context of religious communities in PNG. Of particular note was the significant number of responses that indicated the kinds of internal tensions associated with ongoing changes in gender norms within the churches. For example one respondent stated that,

the church could be seen as hypocritical in arguing for gender equality in the community – when there are some church roles that are restricted to men – people can challenge that (Webster 2012:12–13).

Evidence from the review suggests that all seven CPP churches are in a process of transformation around gender.

The CPP also provided a platform for male and female church leaders who were already seeking to create gender change. Many of the review participants identified themselves as key change agents with a commitment to promoting gender equality in their religious communities extending well beyond the scope and limitations of the CPP. As one respondent described it,

... peer influence is quite strong – so when men see other men showing respect for the roles and contributions of women then they are likely to change too (Webster 2012:14).

In reality, peer influence is a necessary though slow vehicle for change in relation to gender norms that are perpetuated in church structures and policies, often undergirded by deep cultural values and practices that predate the arrival of Christianity in PNG. Nevertheless, the rich interactions between CPP partner staff, the Australian NGOs and donors do lead to a questioning of dominant thinking and organisational culture.

Diversity and complexity of belief and practice on gender equality within churches and the community appeared to be taken into account by review participants in

their narratives and actions. Four out of seven churches demonstrated evidence of developing gender approaches that 'balance or incorporate the positive elements of traditional PNG, church and 'Western' gender concepts ... One participant suggested that

... we should look for the good in traditional cultures (including church culture) and try to strengthen that aspect of things' (Webster 2012:13).

Many church leaders were clear in their view that attempts at rapid change were unlikely to have positive outcomes and might in fact undermine long-term efforts to achieve gender equality. '*I believe it is happening, slowly – but we are getting there*' (Webster 2012:13) sums up a common response from church leadership, whereas the response from CPP staff was more likely to feel that change needed to be faster. What was also equally clear was that the collaboration between local and external stakeholders on the CPP enabled an expansion of common ground that noticeably increased the pace of gender rights reform in the churches.

Conclusion

It is a well established principle in community development practice that success in the achievement of any development objective is more likely to be achieved when all stakeholders in the community have ownership of the decisions about their future and participate in the changes taking place in their lives. Given that in the majority of countries facing the most extreme development challenges, large sections of the population are part of religious communities, it does not make sense for development actors to exclude or ignore those religious communities, especially when seeking to deal with challenging and seemingly intractable issues such as gender inequality and gender-based violence. Challenges notwithstanding, increasingly there is a recognition that what Ter Haar (2011) describes as 'integral development' (deriving from an understanding that religion and development have more in common than is normally apparent) is an alternative to separation between the worlds of religion and development. In the case of PNG we find that religious communities are neither simple nor homogenous in their relationship to gender inequality or other development challenges. They are capable of being both part of the problem and part of the solution. Further, the separation of religion and development constructs an uncomfortable dichotomy for many Melanesians who see churches as intrinsically involved in peace building, service provision, policy development and the construction of social capital. An unnecessarily confrontational approach to gender inequality closes down pathways to future development and may result in a hardening of fundamentalist tendencies. Without compromising on human rights, a nuanced engagement of religious communities through a participatory approach such as the CPP, that values the religious resources in a faith community and seeks to harness its inherent diversity and complexity, opens new pathways to a future free from gender inequality and violence.

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